

Proclamation 7309—National Safe Boating Week, 2000

May 18, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Living in a country bordered by oceans and blessed with abundant lakes and rivers, Americans have made recreational boating one of our Nation's most popular pastimes. Each year, more than 74 million Americans take to the water with family and friends to relax and enjoy the beauty of the natural world.

But each year, for too many Americans, boating ends in tragedy. Most boating-related injuries and deaths are the result of human error and poor judgment, caused, for example, by excessive speed, failure to follow safe navigation rules, and drinking or taking drugs while operating watercraft. These injuries could easily be prevented by using common sense and making safety the first priority.

Boating accidents can occur at any time—whether the water is smooth or turbulent and whether the boater is experienced or a novice. One of the best ways to make a recreational boating experience safe and enjoyable is to ensure that everyone on board always wears a life jacket. To reinforce this life-saving message, the National Safe Boating Campaign has once again selected the theme “Boat Smart from the Start! Wear Your Life Jacket!” for this year's observance. Recreational boating organizations, including the National Safe Boating Council and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard, other Federal agencies, and State and local governments, are continuing to promote safety through education by emphasizing the importance of wearing life jackets and practicing boating and water safety.

In recognition of the importance of safe boating practices, the Congress, by joint resolution approved June 4, 1958 (36 U.S.C. 131), as amended, has authorized and requested the President to proclaim annually the 7-day period ending on the last Friday

before Memorial Day as “National Safe Boating Week.”

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 20 through May 26, 2000, as National Safe Boating Week. I encourage the governors of the 50 States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and officials of other areas subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, to join in observing this occasion and to urge all Americans to use safe boating practices throughout the year.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eighteenth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 23.

Remarks on the 50th Anniversary of Armed Forces Day in Suitland, Maryland

May 19, 2000

Thank you very much. Secretary Cohen, thank you for your kind words and your truly exemplary leadership of the Department of Defense. Secretary Slater, thank you for your presence here and the support you have given the Coast Guard. General Shelton, thank you for your lifetime of service and for your leadership of the Joint Chiefs. And Senator Glenn, I thank you for your service, your personal friendship to me, and your astonishing lifetime example. We're all looking forward to going into space in our late seventies, thanks to you. I thank the members of the Joint Chiefs and the Service Secretaries. General Jones, General Shalikashvili, thank you for being here. Ladies and gentlemen of our Armed Forces, family members, and friends.

I want to begin, if I might, by paying tribute to the men and women of our military who work in the White House, my Andrews-based Air Force One crews, my helicopter crews, my military aides, and those from

every branch of the services who actually work at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Without you, we couldn't do America's business, stand up for America's interests, or even keep the White House open as America's house. Thank you for 7½ wonderful years.

As has already been said, 50 years ago tomorrow America marked the first Armed Forces Day. It was then an uncertain time for our country, Americans coming to realize that our new global leadership carried with it global responsibilities, chief among them, the defense of freedom across the world. American troops then still occupied Germany and soon would be pouring into Korea. All around us there were new and terrifying weapons, determined adversaries, and an unfamiliar landscape. Against that backdrop, President Truman moved to put in place the foundations of America's modern military, a force united under the Department of Defense.

The first Armed Forces Day celebrated service unity, honored those in uniform, and reassured Americans that our military was ready for whatever challenges lay ahead. Fifty years later we can look back proudly on a half-century in which America's best have more than met those challenges. We are as secure at home and safe from external threat today as we have been at any time in our long history. For that, we owe every American in uniform and everyone who has served before an eternal debt.

Next week, as we celebrate Memorial Day, we will remember the thousands of men and women who have given their lives so that we might live in peace. I hope all Americans will teach our children how their forebears fought and died for the freedoms we hold dear. I have asked every office in the Federal Government to observe a moment of remembrance for our military dead, to put the "memorial" back in Memorial Day.

Over my service as President, I have seen our men and women in uniform meet every conceivable kind of challenge, from flying flawless missions over Kosovo to working to contain Saddam Hussein to keeping our word on the Korean Peninsula to slogging through the mud to rebuild lives and communities in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch in Central America to keeping the

peace in Bosnia, and everywhere you go, always representing the best of America.

Some of you have mentioned to me, from time to time as I meet our service personnel, that you see in the pictures at the Oval Office the stands of military coins I have there given to me by units, officers, and enlisted personnel all over the world. I have about 400 now. And my historians at the White House say I have visited more military units than any President before. All I can tell you is, it's been one of the great honors of my life. I never get tired of it. And if you have a coin I don't have, I'd be glad to have it today. *[Laughter]*

I never cease to be amazed at all the different things we ask our Armed Forces to do. We ask them to serve in the White House or in Kosovo's Camp Bondsteel, on the deck of a carrier or on the crew of a space shuttle launch. We ask you to defend our interests in a 21st century world of high-tech weapons, fast-moving, small-scale warfare, peace-keeping—sometimes when there's no peace to keep—and terrorism. But the 21st century challenge is the same essentially as President Truman defined 50 years ago, readiness for any eventuality. Today I want to talk just a little bit about what we are doing and must continue to do in the areas of personnel readiness, combat readiness, and civilian readiness to help you meet that challenge.

As has already been said by previous speakers, the people in our Armed Forces are our most important asset. So our first task is doing the best job we can of recruiting and retaining good people, to train them to do their jobs right, to train them so they can do their jobs safely, and then to provide the state-of-the-art equipment that will keep them ahead of every adversary and every eventuality.

Keeping faith with you is a sacred obligation. We've tried to do it. Over the last 2 years, military pay has been raised by more than 8 percent, with another significant raise slated for this year. This year's raise was the largest in about 20 years. In July we're increasing parts of the military pay scale as much as 5 percent more to reward service members who gain experience and stay with us to put it to use.

And we must never forget that, although we recruit individuals, we must retain families. Thanks to the leadership in the Department of Defense, military child care and schools are now the envy of many civilians. We are working to provide better military housing and taking steps to improve access to medical care for all military personnel, families, and retirees.

Readiness also means making sure our forces are trained to fight and equipped to win. The world we live in demands a high tempo of operations. That puts strains on individuals and families and creates important challenges for readiness.

I realize that I am the first President to serve his entire service in the post-cold-war era and that, as a consequence, I have imposed more high-tempo operations on the military, more different kinds of things in more different circumstances than any previous President in peacetime. Often, when I see our young men and women in uniform, I don't know whether to thank them or apologize, because I know what burdens I have imposed on many of you and your families. All I can tell you is America is a safer, stronger place, and the world is a more peaceful, more democratic place because of what you have done. And we have to continue to do everything we can to ease your burdens and make it more likely that you will be successful.

We have tried to watch combat readiness closely. We have tried to respond rapidly where there are strains. For several years now, we've increased the amount of money available for readiness spending, including \$5.4 billion for the year ahead. We've worked with Congress to protect funds for training and equipment and proposed an increase of \$124 billion to support military personnel, strengthen readiness, and speed modernization with improved facilities through the next 5 years. That includes the latest advances in digital communications and navigation technology for soldiers in the field, advanced combat aircraft, like Super Hornets, Raptors, and the Joint Strike fighter, new and modernized destroyers, and a new aircraft carrier and, less exciting but perhaps even more important, more money for spare parts.

I've talked about our budget and priorities for readiness, but we also must meet our responsibility for civilian readiness, creating an understanding among our elected officials and among our people at large that power and prestige don't just happen, that America cannot be a leader for peace and freedom and prosperity without paying the price. Civilian readiness means commitment to keeping our military the best trained, the best equipped, the best led fighting force. It means support for diplomacy that can help us avoid using force in the first place. It means that when we do make the difficult decision to commit our troops, we stay the course.

Secretary Cohen talked about our involvement in Kosovo. Last spring I had the privilege of meeting with our fighting men and women from Barksdale and Norfolk to Aviano and Skopje. When I met the Wing Commander of Spangdahlem Air Force Base in Germany, he told me, "Sir, our team wants to stay with this mission until it's finished." He could have spoken for every one of our men and women in uniform. When we and our Allies responded to the rising tide of violence in Kosovo, we sent a message of hope and determination to Europe and all the world.

Let me remind you that there had previously been a terrible war in Bosnia. It took the world community a long time to respond. When we did, we put an end to it, and people are living and working together there in peace. Then as if no lesson had been learned, Mr. Milosevic drove nearly a million people out of their homes in a poor country, over difficult roads and adverse circumstances. Thousands lost their lives, but nearly a million people were run out of their country just because of their ethnic background and the way they worship God. That was a threat to our national interests because it was a threat to the security and stability of southeastern Europe and because it was a colossal affront to the basic notions of human rights and freedom.

The 20th century has witnessed a lot of this kind of hate and human suffering. But it ended with an affirmation of freedom and human dignity, because in the face of division and destruction, we helped to stand with our

Allies and good people in that region for humanity and for freedom.

Well, what's happened since then? Our troops are on the ground in Kosovo, doing another job every bit as vital, working to help the people there rebuild their lives and build a lasting peace. Now our Allies and partners have taken on the lion's share of the burden. Since the end of the conflict, our European Allies and others are supplying 85 percent of the troops and nearly 85 percent of the police on the ground. Our share of international assistance for Kosovo is now well under 20 percent.

It's been a fair burden sharing because we bore the majority of the responsibility for the military conflict that made the peace possible. But it's still important that we do our part. Our presence is vital, for our forces symbolize something fundamental about the promise of America, the possibility of true peace and, frankly, the confidence your presence gives to others because nobody doubts that if any job can be done, you will do it. Our forces in Kosovo are doing a terrific job under still difficult circumstances. We must give them the tools to succeed and the time to succeed.

Yesterday the Senate of the United States, in bipartisan fashion, cast a profoundly important vote. They affirmed our Nation's commitment to stay the course in Kosovo, rejecting language that would have called our resolve into question, permitting people to say, had it passed, that the United States would walk away from a job half-done and leave others to finish. But the Senate said, "No, we won't walk out on our Allies. We won't turn our back on freedom's promise. It may be a difficult job, but we started it, and we intend to finish it." And I would like to thank the Senators, Republicans as well as Democrats, and the American leaders around the country, Republicans as well as Democrats, who took this position to stand by you until the mission is completed.

In 1963, on Armed Forces Day, a great American veteran, President John Kennedy, said that our service men and women "stand as guardians of peace and visible evidence of our determination to meet any threat to the peace with measured strength and high resolve. They are also evidence of a harsh

but inescapable truth, that the survival of freedom requires great cost and commitment and great personal sacrifice."

We're a long way from the cold war world in which President Kennedy spoke those words. But today, the words are still true, where you stand as freedom's guardians in a world where communication is instant but so is destruction, a world where the threats of the last century have largely been vanquished but the timeless demons of hate and fear and new destructive possibilities rooted in new technologies and new networks are with us, in a world where millions still struggle for liberty, decency, and the very basics of life.

Today America thanks you for your commitment, renews our pledge to stand with you, and asks you to continue to do your best and give your best for freedom. The last 50 years are proof that when you do your job, and we support you, the world is a much, much better place.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. in Hangar 3 at Andrews Air Force Base. In his remarks, he referred to former Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. David C. Jones, USAF, (Ret.), and Gen. John M. Shalikashvili, USA; President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Remarks at a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Luncheon in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

May 19, 2000

Thank you so much. I told the folks at our table here that I have been in this room many times. The first time I came here was long before I was President, but I've been here a lot since I've been in office. I've been to a lot of dinners, lunches, meetings. I love this city hall, and I love this room, and I never tire of coming here.

I want to thank all of you, and in their absence, the mayor and your former mayor as well, Ed Rendell. He's doing a great job